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American Medical Women's Association c/o
Local Legends 801 North Fairfax Street,
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Dear Ms. Kissell,

I am pleased and honored to nominate Diane D. Homan, M.D. for recognition in the *Changing the Face of Medicine: Local Legends* Congressional Award program. Diane D. Homan, M.D. has been part of the Rush-Copley medical staff since 2000 but part of the Rush system for Health since 1987.

Dr. Diane D. Homan learned early in her life that medicine was her calling. The other children in the family ran the other way when it was time for her grandmother to wrap her grandfather's legs. He suffered from debilitating varicose veins that rendered him unable to work and in constant agony. Dr. Homan learned from her grandmother, the most influential woman in her life, how to tear the bed sheets into long strips and wrap them properly around her grandfather's swollen and aching legs. She learned early the disadvantages faced by the poor. Had her family had means, perhaps her grandfather wouldn't have suffered so.

Dr. Homan was raised with a special kind of richness in the midst of consuming poverty. As a child she wore home sewn clothes and ate only what the family raised on their small farm in rural Pennsylvania. Shoes came once a year and if you outgrew yours, Father cut the ends off and you wore them until it was time to buy new. You never asked for what you didn't need. But there was love, encouragement, and companionship in her early life that she has translated into her medical practice and teaching duties as program director of the Rush-Copley Family Practice Residency Program.

Dr. Homan began developing her desire to help others by serving as a "candy striper" at the local hospital when she was twelve years old. Later, she worked regular hours at a nursing home caring for the elderly and frail in her community. She eventually became a critical care nurse and during her eight year career established the first dialysis center in northern Indiana as well as the first neonatal program at the hospital in which she worked.

It was at this time she decided to leave nursing for a career as a physician so she could give even more of herself to those who needed her. Her penchant for building long term relationships led her to family practice where she delivers babies, cares for them in childhood, guides them through early adulthood and often finds herself delivering their babies, too. Dr. Homan has more than a few second-generation patients!

Her understanding of the importance of primary care to a community, and her desire to affect the lives of more people led her to write the application for the Rush-Copley Family Practice Residency Program eight years ago. She has fostered the program and last year fully ensconced herself in it becoming the program director. Within the structure of the residency program, Dr. Homan touches so many people: residents, patients, families and other physicians.

As the only family practice residency program in the Fox Valley area, the program brings the resources of a large university program with its opportunities for research and practice enhancement, ensuring that evidence based medicine is practiced among providers in area. For the patients seen in the family practice residency program, it presents an opportunity to receive quality health care. Aurora and the surrounding communities have some unique patient populations. There are under-represented minorities who need special consideration with regard to their health care and Dr. Homan's program is able to provide what they need.

As she selected clinical guidelines for developing the program, she chose those areas that cover the special needs of our population areas. For instance, our communities have many residents of Hispanic origin; a culturally diverse group that carries within it significant health risks that are not necessarily represented in other groups. Diabetes is more common than in other ethnic groups. The population is young and so there are many young pregnant women and infants needing care. Unfortunately, these women also are at higher risk than other groups for domestic violence. Dr. Homan teaches the residents to practice as she does, seeking to identify the issues that make these women vulnerable including depression, lack of education, and sometimes the inability to communicate and to provide counseling, treatment and additional resources to help these mothers and their children. Her initiatives open the eyes of doctors in training to the varied aspects of our society. Residents are exposed to practicing medicine in a diverse community and this deepens their knowledge and compassion.

Dr. Homan is a committed member of the Aurora Primary Care Consortium, working tirelessly to be sure primary care needs are met in the community. She and her residents work closely with emergency room staff to be sure patients are linked with a primary care doctor so they have continuity of care. Every fourth night, Dr. Homan takes the cases of uninsured emergency patients. Last year, she brought over 400 un- or underinsured patients into her practice. Through the Kane County Health Department, she accepts over 100 unassigned obstetrical deliveries each year as well as another 100 babies from the newborn nursery and she maintains all those babies in her practice to guarantee they receive appropriate care as they grow and develop.

In addition, she works closely with the Visiting Nurse Association to provide follow-up care for women with abnormal pap smears. She offers cryotherapy for the treatment of abnormal cells revealed in pap tests to women who might not be able to afford it.

Many of the patients in her practice and the family practice residency program are the working poor. Some are undocumented immigrants. This is of no consequence to Dr. Homan. These are people who need her care, so she provides it, offering stress testing to diabetic Hispanic patients and even vasectomies for men who cannot otherwise afford it. These are things most free clinics don't provide, but Dr. Homan believes offering these kinds of services is integral to the providing longitudinal care in a primary care setting that is cost effective and offers the promise of better health.

One of her goals is to teach residents the benefits and rewards of taking care of special needs populations whether they are from a particular ethnic group, have a certain disease such as AIDS, or are personally or financially vulnerable. She believes and teaches that every family physician needs to contribute to the community in which he or she practices. The needs of the city of Aurora are well defined, and Dr. Diane Homan makes it her mission to show others how they can contribute for the benefit of the entire community.

An example of her philosophy in action is a program for pregnant teens called Changes. Dr. Homan developed an eight-week educational program that included prenatal information, baby care, and what she calls "life care." The program also encourages girls to finish high school. Dr. Homan and her residents delivered up to 300 babies per year in the program.

Taking her gifts abroad, Dr. Homan has had three life changing international experiences that exemplify what she believes. In 1993 she was asked to address the deans of 13 medical schools in Poland about how to improve the curricula at their medical schools to make them well rounded enough for reciprocity with the universities in the United States. She was instrumental in creating an exchange program for Polish doctors to better train them and increase their skills and knowledge.


The government of Romania asked Dr. Homan to help them reorganize and restructure their desperately broken orphanage system. She worked with officials on improvements and created an exchange program with a group of American nurses who go to Romania regularly to work with health care and orphanage staffs. Because of her help, children in Romanian orphanages are now getting more appropriate attention than the past. Many of the abuses common in the orphanages including restraining and slapping babies, and binding toddlers' feet have stopped.

Dr. Homan also participated in the People to People Program in India, working with women who were widowed and raising children. The women she met are treated as second-class citizens, but she helped to empower them by assisting in the development of an irrigation system in their communities so they are able to grow food for their families and sell it for a profit to buy other necessities for their families.

Dr. Homan attributes her ability to lend these talents to the wider world as a gift from heaven. She didn't cut a path but followed her heart. Truly a distinctive woman and unsung heroine, Dr. Diane D. Homan is deserving of the National Library of Medicine/American Medical Women's Association, Local Legends award.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit a nominee for this outstanding award.

Sincerely,



Congressman J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker